

It's Smart To Be Gallery Wise!

THE WILLIAM ROCKHILL NELSON GALLERY OF ART

AND ATKINS MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

N E W S F L A S H E S

November 1,

1936

SPECIAL EXHIBITION OF JAPANESE ART: The art of Japan is being featured this year to a much greater degree than ever before in this country. Enthusiastic interest in the artistic achievements of this far eastern country was aroused by the superb exhibition of Japanese Art held at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in celebration of Harvard's Tercentenary. Imperial as well as private collectors lent treasures hitherto not seen outside their native land. The result has been an unprecedented interest and curiosity in the artistic endeavors of Nippon.

The Nelson-Atkins Galleries are devoting their three special exhibition galleries during November to a display of their own collection of Japanese court costumes, Nō robes, screens, prints and pottery, augmented by twenty-five Ukiyo-ye (scenes of the Passing World) paintings lent by Raymond A. Bidwell, esquire, of Springfield, Massachusetts.

No country in the world has regarded textile weaving with greater favor than Japan. The cultivation of silk worms as an industry has been carried on since its introduction from China in the 3rd century. In the 4th, 5th, and 6th centuries the emperor appointed committees to supervise the manufacture of silk and to carry the knowledge of various weaves to the people in the provinces who could not study at the court. As a result of this imperial patronage and sanction of the textile industry, all Japanese were intensely interested in this field of activity.

During the Genroku period (1688-1703) luxury and elegance were considered the most important things in life. Customs and costumes became so elaborate that the government finally had to intervene. While the lower classes fought for food to live, the court nobles labored to hold up their gold encrusted robes.

On the stage the lyrical literary dramas called the Nō plays, were rivalled in splendor by the more popular types of plays which dealt with emotional or martial life. It was during this same period that the Joruri or Puppet theatre became so popular that it influenced the movements of the actors on the true stage. As a result of this great interest in the theatre, the costumes of the actors had a strong influence on daily attire. Favorite mimes set fashions and initiated styles quite as much as any Hollywood stars of today.

This gay and carefree life of the theatre is lightly and spontaneously transferred to us through the medium of the gorgeous robes saved from this period and by the enchanting scenes depicted on the screens and in the paintings which Mr. Bidwell has so kindly lent to the Gallery. These paintings of the Ukiyo-ye school were done for the delight of the common people. The artists who produced them were the same men who made the prints. But whereas the Japanese people never placed any special value upon the wood block prints and allowed thousands of them to be sent to Europe, the paintings were always highly prized. Few collections exist of the size and importance of Mrs. Bidwell's and the Gallery is indeed happy to be able to present it for the enjoyment of its visitors.

Japanese art is essentially an emotional art. It is extremely decorative with a tendency toward the Romantic. A visit to the November special exhibition will be an entrance into a land of youthful gayety and delicate charm.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH: The Masterpiece Room will feature for the month of November an important group of Chinese Glass. Very little has been known of glass making in China before the 17th and 18th centuries, due to the fact that so few specimens have survived. Actually, however, thanks to some very recent discoveries, we know that glass was manufactured in China at least as early as the 4th century B.C. The Gallery collection contains a most important covered bowl from this early period which was featured last year at the International Exhibition in London. It may well be that the art of glass making was lost or forgotten in the troubled times from the fifth to the second centuries B.C. It is not until the Sung dynasty (960-1280 A.D.) that we again find occasional examples of Chinese glass making and the Gallery is fortunate in possessing a number of magnificent examples from this period, exhibited for the first time as Masterpiece of the Month.

WEDNESDAY EVENING LECTURES: The first two lectures for the month of November will concern the special exhibition of Japanese Art and will be illustrated with material and objects which will be brought down to the auditorium from the exhibition. On the evening of November 4th the lecture will be on Japanese Textiles, given by Miss Hughes who made a special study in this field this past summer in Boston and Cambridge. The permanent collection contains not only fine examples of No Drama Costumes and Priest Robes, but also many peasant kimonos and costumes.

On Wednesday evening, November 11th, Mr. Sickman will lecture on Japanese Prints and Paintings. The splendid examples of Ukiyo-ye paintings lent by Mr. Bidwell will be featured as illustrative material.

During the winter season, Mr. Gardner will give a complete series of lectures on Wednesday Evenings on the History of Furniture. The permanent collection already contains fine examples of furniture from almost every period, and this material will be augmented by slides. In these lectures, the architecture, civilization, and the interiors will be considered. The ever-popular field of furniture will be interesting to the homemaker, the student, or the interior decorator. The first talk of this course will given on November 18 and will be devoted to an introduction and to the furniture of ancient times, stressing its importance as an influence on later periods.

One of the most interesting developments after the backward middle ages was Gothic architecture. This very original departure was immediately reflected in the church and secular furniture of the period and the various new types and styles that developed not only in France, the home of the Gothic, but also in England and Italy, will be discussed in Mr. Gardner's second lecture on Wednesday evening, November 25th.

BROCKHURST PRINTS: The exhibition of prints by the English etcher, Gerald Brockhurst, brought to the Gallery by the Kansas City Print Club, will continue through November 15th. The plates are arranged chronologically, beginning in Gallery XVI, so that the various steps in the progress of this artist toward the achievement of his amazing and masterly technique may more readily be studied. Print enthusiasts are finding the exhibition a rare opportunity to study a comprehensive group of the work of one of the foremost etchers of today and one who has few equals in any period.

ITALIAN PRINTS: On November 15th, Gallery XV will be installed with a selected group of Italian prints from the permanent collection. This now contains outstanding examples from the earliest type of niello prints of the fourteen hundreds through the fine work of Tiepolo and Canaletto in the 18th century. From the first period will be included an example of a Tarocchi Card, The Florentine Sybil, the great "Battle of Ten Men" by Pollaiuolo and the superb frieze of "The Sea Gods" by Mantegna, the only impression in existence which is unclipped. The 16th century will be represented by our Mocetto "Calumny", the Jacopo da Barbari "Three Prisoners", and a fine chiaraschuro print. Canaletto with his fine "Loggia with a Lantern", Tiepolo with his "Tomb of Punchinello", and Piranesi with one of his characteristic "Ruins of Rome", will represent the 18th century, the last great period of Italian Art.

GERMAN PRINTS: From the permanent collection also, Gallery XVI will be installed on November 15th with a retrospective group of German Prints. As Dürer was given an exhibition in the print galleries this spring, this artist will not be included except by his "Great Fortune" and his thought-provoking "Melancholia". The early men, Master E.S., Schongauer, Van Meckenem and Springinkles will be represented, as will the three great giants of the 16th century, Cranach, Holbien, and Hans Baldung Grün. An interesting group of the Little Masters, so called because all of their plates were small in size, Aldegraver, Altdorfer, Beham, and Pencz, will be shown. In connection with German print making, it is interesting to note that the great period covered only about one hundred years, roughly from 1450 to 1550, and that we have no great artists or engravers after the latter date.

PRINT CLUB MEETING: The November meeting of the Kansas City Print Club will be held in the Atkins Auditorium at eight o'clock on Monday evening, the 16th. Dr. Birger Sandzen of Lindsborg, Kansas, has been invited to speak to the group.

If you are interested in fine prints, from the standpoint of artist, collector, or student, the Print Club offers an excellent opportunity for increased knowledge and for keeping in touch with the print world. The Secretary of the organization, Mr. Willard Hougland, will be glad to furnish details as to its activities.

FRENCH DRAWINGS: The first of a series of exhibitions of drawings from the permanent collection and devoted to the work of one country alone, will be installed in Gallery XIII on November 15th. At this time, the French School will be featured.

Drawings from the 16th century are very rare, and we are fortunate in having the fine "Portrait" by Dumoustier, who carried on the tradition of the Clouets. In the 17th century, Claude Lorrain was one of the greatest painters and his lovely "Landscape on the Tiber" in brown wash is very typical of his individual style. Our group of drawings from the 18th century is very comprehensive, and contains not only our fine Watteau sheet, the early Fragonard done while in Italy, our Boucher "Cupid", but fine landscapes by Hubert Robert and Vernet and superb figures by Trinquesse and Van Loo, with an exquisite study of "Hands" by Coypel. From the 19th century will be shown the characteristic "Bather" by Degas, presented by Mrs. Lighton, the Daumier sheet of heads, an interesting carnival scene by Beaumont, a most unhappy "Pierrot" by Gavarni, and a fine, free sketch of "Arabs" by Fromentin.

Interest in drawings is increasing in America, and many collectors are treasuring these rapid, intimate and spontaneous records that are often far closer to the artist than the finished painting for which the sketches were preliminary studies.

FRIENDS OF ART: The study group of the Friends of Art has resumed its bi-weekly meetings and announces for the program on November 6th a talk on Modern Sculpture by Mr. Wallace Rosenbauer of the Kansas City Art Institute. On November 20th Mr. Gardner will discuss contemporary exhibitions and artists of Germany. The meetings are held at eleven o'clock in the Atkins Auditorium.

"DRAWING FOR FUN" WITH THE SATURDAY AFTERNOON STORY HOUR: "Drawing for Fun", which has met with such success at the Milwaukee Art Institute, was enthusiastically received by a group of Kansas City youngsters last week. Under the direction of Mr. James Roth of the Gallery staff, the boys and girls who come to the Atkins Auditorium at two o'clock on Saturdays, find themselves drawing objects and expressing action they would have thought impossible - and as one boy said in a surprised tone "and its fun"! Any child who comes to the Gallery on Saturday afternoons from two until three may join the group. The class is free and no talent in drawing is required. Upon entering the auditorium, each child is presented with a drawing board, paper, and a large black crayon. The newcomer is soon engrossed in following Mr. Roth's directions and shortly has his pages filled with active figures. After about forty-five minutes of drawing, the children learn that they have been drawing something inspired by objects in the gallery collection and the group goes upstairs for the rest of the period to discuss the masterpiece and hear the story of its background.

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Children who were too late to enter the Saturday morning classes before the enrollment was closed, as well as those who are enrolled, will be glad to hear of this new activity and will want to join us on Saturday afternoons in "Drawing for Fun".

ATKINS DEDICATION CEREMONY: Thursday, October 22nd was the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Mary McAfee Atkins, whose vision and generosity gave to Kansas City the Atkins Museum of Fine Arts. In commemoration of this anniversary, the new portrait bas-relief of Mrs. Atkins, made by Wallace Rosenbauer for the Atkins Auditorium staircase, was dedicated and formally presented to the city.

After the invocation by Reverend Richard M. Trelease, Dr. Burris A. Jenkins spoke briefly on the life of Mrs. Atkins, especially of her deep interest in giving Kansas City the advantage of an art museum. The plaque was unveiled by Mr. David B. Childs, one of the Atkins Trustees, and accepted on behalf of the city by Mayor Bryce B. Smith. Mr. Herbert V. Jones, the other trustee, officiated.

VISITORS: The number of out of town visitors and scholars in the field of Oriental Art who come to Kansas City particularly to study the Gallery collection, testify to its growing importance in this field. Mrs. Walter Sedgwick of London, whose collection is well known and who lent many objects to the International Exhibition of Chinese Art last year, expressed the opinion that "It is a joy to go through a collection where everything represents the best of its kind".

Mr. Albert T. Gardner of the Rubel Asiatic Bureau of Harvard University spent a week here studying the Oriental Collection. Mr. Howard C. Hollis, Curator of Oriental Art at the Cleveland Museum, and Mrs. Hollis also spent several days in Kansas City for this purpose.

Mr. Charles Amsden, Secretary-Treasurer of the Southwest Museum at Los Angeles also visited the Gallery recently. He was particularly interested, of course, in the American Indian Room and in the fine collection of blankets.

STAFF NEWS: Mr. Gardner, the Director, will return early this month from Germany where he has been studying museums and museum installations under the auspices of the Oberlaender Trust.

Miss Frances O'Donnell, in charge of childrens' activities at the Gallery, spent October 15th in Kirksville where she gave a lecture before the Northeast Missouri Teachers' Convention.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONCERTS: The second of the series of Sunday afternoon concerts by Tau Chapter of Sigma Alpha Iota will be given at three-thirty on November 15th in the Atkins Auditorium. This is the third season of concerts at the Gallery by this group and they have added much to the pleasure of our Sunday visitors.

TWO O'CLOCK GALLERY TALKS:

Tues., Nov. 3	- Chinese Glass	- Gallery XIV	- Mr. Sickman
Wed., " 4	- Japanese Exhibition	- Loan Galleries	- Mr. Sickman and Miss Hughes
Thurs., " 5	- American Wing	- Gallery XXXI	- Miss Jackson
Fri., " 6	- Oriental Rugs	- " XX	- Miss Hughes
Tues., " 10	- Chinese Bronzes	- " XXV	- Mr. Sickman
Wed., " 11	- Classical Art	- " XXVIII	- Mr. Wittmann
Thurs., " 12	- American Portraits	- " XXIX	- Miss Jackson
Fri., " 13	- Tapestries	- " V	- Miss Hughes
Tues., " 17	- English Porcelains	- East Corridor	- Mr. Sickman
Wed., " 18	- European Painting	- Gallery III	- Mr. Wittmann
Thurs., " 19	- Renaissance Textiles	- " XVIII	- Miss Jackson
Fri., " 20	- Persian Pottery	- " XXII	- Miss Hughes
Tues., " 24	- Chinese Porcelains	- North Corridor	- Mr. Sickman
Wed., " 25	- Prints	- Gallery XV	- Mr. Wittmann
Thurs., " 26	- Holiday	- Gallery Closed	
Fri., " 27	- American Indian Weaving		- Mr. Ellis

November 11, 1955

Dear Sirs:

Enclosed are two copies of the program for the evening of November 11, 1955. The program is a special presentation of the works of the American Impressionist painter, J.M.W. Turner. The program is being presented at the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City, Missouri.

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William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art
4525 Oak Street
Kansas City, Missouri

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